DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 028 SP 036 746

AUTHOR	Roberts, John; Woodhead, Keith
TITLE	Education Managers in Transition: Evaluation of an Experiential Learning Course in Lithuania. Working Papers in Education.
INSTITUTION	Wolverhampton Univ. (England). Educational Research Unit.
SPONS AGENCY	British Council, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-897948-41-7
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	21p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Education; *Educational Administration; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; Politics of Education; Program Evaluation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	England; *Lithuania

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the approach adopted in an inservice course, Training the Trainers in Management Skills, tutored by staff from the University of Wolverhampton (England), which took place twice in Villnius (Lithuania) in 1992 and 1994. The participants were approximately 80 Lithuanian education managers (directors and deputy directors of schools and inspectors). The background to the course and salient features of Lithuanian society and education in transition are described, with a focus on those characteristics of the Soviet period that continue to influence the management and the nature of educational institutions, acknowledged as key institutions in the democratization of independent Lithuania. The course was based on assumptions that an experiential learning approach had the greatest potential to be effective; these assumptions and experiential learning principles are explored, and the appropriateness of the methodology to the Lithuanian situation is discussed. The course evaluation took place in four ways: (1) group questionnaires, (2) individual participant reports, (3) school visits, and (4) individual and small group feedback. Although participants had little prior knowledge of experiential learning, 61 percent felt confident enough to use experiential learning teaching methods in staff development and training sessions they would conduct. Conclusions are suggested about the inservice course, the effects on the participants, and the place of experiential learning methodology in inservice training in the former Soviet empire. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/ND)

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Education managers in transition: evaluation of an experiential learning course in Lithuania.

John Roberts and Keith Woodhead.

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S1036746

First published in 1995

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Roberts, J. and Woodhead, K.
Education managers in transition: evaluation of an experiential learning course in Lithuania. –
(Working Papers in Education).
I. Title II. Series

ISBN 1 - 897948 - 41 - 7

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Set in Palatino 10
and printed by the Print Services Unit
University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton

Abstract.

This study discusses the approach adopted in an in-service course Training the Trainers in Management Skills, tutored by staff from the University of Wolverhampton with funding from the British Council, which took place twice in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1992 and 1994. The participants were approximately 80 Lithuanian education managers (directors and deputy directors of schools and inspectors).

The background to the course and salient features of Lithuanian society and education in transition are described, with a focus on those characteristics of the Soviet period which continue to influence the management and the nature of educational insitutions, acknowledged as key institutions in the democratisation of independent Lithuania.

The course was based on assumptions that an experiential learning approach had the greatest potential to be effective; these assumptions and experiential learning principles are explored and the appropriateness of the methodology to the Lithuanian situation is discussed.

There is a brief account of the methodology of the evaluation of the course and discussion of the findings.

Conclusions are suggested about the in-service course itself, the effects on the participants and the place of experiential learning methodology in in-service training in the former Soviet empire.

Acknowledgement.

The authors would like to thank Professor Colin Fletcher for his help in producing this article.

Contents.

	Page
Abstract	
Acknowledgement	
Contents	i
List of Tables	ii
Education managers in transition: evaluation of an experiential learning course in Lithuania	**1**
Introduction	2
Lithuania's past and present	2
The tutors' assumptions	5
The course's training principles	6
Course evaluations	7
Evaluation results	7
Reflections on the evaluations	10
References	**13**
Members of the Editorial Board	**15**

List of Tables.

		Page
I	Evaluation of methods	8
II	Programme evaluations	9
III	Evaluation of teaching and learning techniques	9
IV	Evaluation of understanding	9

Introduction.

In November 1992 the School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, and Vilnius Pedagogical University, Lithuania embarked upon a British Council funded programme which would see University of Wolverhampton staff work in Lithuania with two groups of Lithuania education managers. The title of the programme was Training the Trainers in Management Skills and a maximum of 80 managers were to form the working groups. Two staff managed and delivered the programme between 1992 and 1994 making six visits to Lithuania. Each visit contained eight teaching days.

Lithuania's past and present.

There is a remaining legacy of the Soviet period in many of the general characteristics of Lithuanian education. Lithuanian colleagues, in informal or semi-formal encounters with Westerners, frequently identify difficulties and problems in the past and stress that these remain strong residual features following independence. Therefore, what appear to be the most influential aspects of this legacy for the adoption of education management training and practice will be reviewed.

Lithuania is one of the three Baltic Republics which are often thought of as a single entity but which are culturally very different and diverse (Vooglaid and Märja 1992). Lithuania is a predominantly Catholic nation which can trace a rich history back to the days when it held sway over a considerable empire which stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The geographic area occupied by Lithuania has been fought over, settled and dominated by a number of stronger neighbours. This has resulted in a linguistic and cultural diversity which is reflected in its education system.

Education has strong roots in history. The first university in Lithuania was founded in 1579 and run by Jesuits for two centuries. Vilnius University was closed by the Russian rulers after a rebellion in 1832. Shortly thereafter, in 1840, the language of instruction in educational establishments became Russian. Since then the country has been ruled, totally or in part, by Russia, Germany and Poland. The end of World War Two saw reconquest by the Red Army followed by nationalisation of industry and agriculture, the establishment of an education system to reflect Communist Party ideals and the purging of entire levels of society.

Following independence in 1990 and 'believing that over fifty years of foreign political control had diluted the influence of distinct 'Lithuanian' cultural values .... Lithuania's new leaders have since embarked upon a programme of cultural restoration and reform' (Anderson 1992). The initial educational move was the 1991 legislation (*The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*) that aimed at increasing democracy within the system and its modernisation. Despite the fifty years of occupation there was some optimism in quarters other than Lithuania and its Ministry For Education And Culture. A report by the International Labour Office (Johanson 1992) said: 'Lithuania's long standing historical emphasis on education has resulted in a strong system of contemporary and university education.'

The report identified some satisfactory features of the country's education system:

> Lithuania's long-standing historical emphasis on education has resulted in a strong system of contemporary general and university education.
>
> (Johanson 1992)

But despite a good standard of academic achievement in mathematics, sciences and the arts Johanson noted serious limitations and weaknesses. Academic work tended to be:

> fact-oriented in relatively narrow fields ... (with) ... insufficient emphasis on analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
>
> (Johanson 1992)

There was a correspondingly narrow range of teaching methods with little employment of pair/group working, project work, active or enquiry learning methods and a corresponding over-reliance on note-taking, fact-learning, drill and practice. There was, too, a predominance of traditional assessments, overwhelmingly used summatively. In addition, there was a general expectation that curriculum, textbooks and any other teaching materials would be mandated and provided by the state; teachers had little experience of devising and producing their own learning resources. The inertia and rigidity suggested in Johanson's description and which overwhelmingly characterised education in Lithuania during the Soviet period, remain persistent in the 1990s. As a consequence, it is clear that education professionals at all levels have little or no experience, personally or professionally, of being adaptive and responsive in their own teaching, nor of managing change. Vooglaid and Märja (1992) have characterised adult individuals in neighbouring Estonia in the Soviet period as 'objects of manipulation'. One of the most highly prized managerial qualities was loyalty, to the status quo. Thus, Lithuanian schools strongly resembled the bureaucratic organisations described by Argyris (1964), who observed their effects on the psychological health of individuals as a tendency to:

> require agents to work in situations where they are dependent, passive, use few important abilities.
>
> (Argyris 1964)

Perhaps the most realistic comment upon the current state of the reform programme was made by Darius Kuolys, a Deputy Minister, who said in 1991:

> We are still far from achieving our goals. The de-Sovietisation of our current system is a complex and lengthy process. It's very hard to overcome the stereotypes, the inertia of thought that is found in the schools and the society at large. Reform of the educational system doesn't mean just changing the national anthems and the seals of the state.

With a recent history of subjugated thought and a future with the prospect of great change the Ministry of Education in 1991 published its document entitled *The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania*, the opening page of which identifies the concern to foster individuality and move away from a strictly authoritarian regime, towards a system where creativity and student centred learning are more valued. The second section of the document outlines in broad statements the duties and responsibilities of those involved in the education system, parents and children as well as teachers. The project between the University of Wolverhampton and Vilnius Pedagogical University was intended to help 'education managers' in this changing environment.

Vooglaid and Märja (1992) have written, from an andragogical perspective, of the 'search for methodological principles to support and facilitate processes of involvement and democratisation' in Estonia, another Baltic state recently independent. Presently, as these authors acknowledge, there are similarities between the situations of the Baltic states, and the following six 'androgogical problems' which they identify seem applicable to the development of in-service training in Lithuania.

1. How to facilitate learning: what models of learning, methods, resources to use.

2. How to 'create readiness for continuous self-improvement' (Vooglaid and Märja) and foster the skills of learning independently.

3. A general lack of experience of successful innovation.

4. The Soviet 'bequest' of people in senior positions for which they are not qualified, trained or equipped: 'general incompetence and irresponsibility on all levels' (Vooglaid and Märja).

5. A narrow and inappropriate conception of management: the 'level of management, organisation and administration is traditionally very low ... It is even more difficult to understand the importance of self-regulation' (Vooglaid and Märja).

6. A perception, developed over 50 years, of the 'valuelessness of education' (Vooglaid and Märja).

These 'problems' indicate the conditions in which in-service management training takes place.

Before the foundations of the training programme are discussed it is important to identify another aspect of the context and nature of this work. This is the challenge represented by the degree of novelty of the management concepts, let alone practices, which are being introduced into the former Soviet empire. Following the collapse of the Soviet empire and state communist system there was an enthusiastic rush to introduce western ideas and practices to eastern and central Europe and the 'Know - How Fund' of the British Council is part of this movement of knowledge transfer and training assistance. However, several writers have begun to argue that this process is highly problematic in the degree of attitudinal and cultural change which it assumes. Among these are Holden (1991, 1993) and Jankowicz (1994) who explore the language and concepts employed in management discourse in the former Soviet empire in order to examine the reality of shared understanding of management ideas between east and west.

While no studies have been undertaken in post-independence Lithuania much more has been written about Russia and, generally, about an ill-defined 'former Soviet Union'. There have been, also, studies of the introduction of Western management in Poland, which has been open to Western influences longer than Lithuania. Because of the dominance and pervasiveness of the general features of the Soviet-imposed system and practices combined with the near-ubiquity of Russian as a lingua franca, the observations of these writers provide some useful illumination of the place, characteristics and perception of 'management' in Lithuania, without under-estimating the differences between the constituent states of the former Soviet empire. For instance, there is no Lithuanian equivalent of the word manager. This is also the case in Polish (Jankowicz 1994) and Russian (Holden 1991 and 1993). All three languages frequently use the neologisms *menedzher* - manager - and *menedzhment* - management - which Holden observes were:

> even in the late 1980s ... still negatively associated with the great constructs of capitalism, production and efficiency.
>
> (Holden 1991)

In 1993 Holden further observed:

> In the scattered Western writing on Soviet management throughout the 1980s there is repeated reference to this quite acute semantic gap. The Danish linguist, Mallory (quoted in Holden 1991) found that the English word 'management' would often be translated as, 'supervision' which had all the wrong connotations. An American journalist, Nancy Trotter, was to discover that Soviet participants on a training course 'had no idea' that leadership and forms of motivation were part and parcel of modern Western thinking on management.
>
> (Holden 1993)

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Holden concludes that terms such as management may be 'conceptually meaningless' to citizens of the former Soviet Union.

The tutors' assumptions.

The course was prepared at short notice and without extensive or detailed background briefing. We incorporated into our planning information gathered from: general media treatment of Lithuania's struggle for independence; what we had read and learned about life in the USSR and its satellites; advice from colleagues who had visited Lithuania on one occasion. From this amalgam of sources and impressions the assumptions which informed the planning of the course can be identified.

Assumption 1. The managers would be ignorant of western management concepts and techniques.

Assumption 2. The managers would have very poorly developed conceptions of the potential role and functions of managers in education and of the characteristics of effective schools.

Assumption 3. In working in the education system managers would have experienced predominantly autocratic management and communication styles.

Assumption 4. Increased spending on education would not be a route to improvement in the foreseeable future; Lithuania has a general and acute shortage of resources of all kinds.

Assumption 5. Among the group of managers there was likely to be some who had experimented and innovated in ways from which they and other managers could learn.

Assumption 6. There was likely to be little or no sustained or effective support for continued innovation and development after the conclusion of the course.

Assumption 7. The managers would be busy practitioners, holding demanding positions, who would welcome realistic suggestions about how school management and effectiveness could be improved.

Assumption 8. The managers would lack confidence and/or clarity of direction with regard to the nature and purposes of education management in the post-independence ferment.

Assumption 9. Participants would have experienced in-service training which emphasised the products of courses and convergent approaches to learning.

These assumptions called for an approach which would do more than merely introduce western management thinking and practice. We gave priority to modelling the use of learner-centred approaches and using these to develop participants skills and confidence which could be used in school-based improvements. Throughout, an emphasis on communication skills would be required, exemplifying learning from peers as a basis for future networking and mutual support.

The course's training principles.

Jankowicz (1994) stresses the limitations and dangers in an oversimplified model of cultural change processes and, in particular, naive attempts to transfer and replicate western ideas and practice in eastern and central Europe. We, the course tutors decided at the outset to utilise experiential learning and teaching methods throughout our visits. The rationale for this was a desire to escape from a formalised and didactic system which was the norm in Lithuania and to enable the programme to link new ideas and theories more easily with the previous experiences of the participants as well as the current state of educational reform in Lithuania. Additionally it was intended to present the participants with as wide range as possible of learning, teaching and training techniques. Each participant was expected to produce an action plan at the end of the first visit, return to their place of work and implement it. During the second visit each person was expected to review and evaluate their action plan identifying what changes they intended to make.

The origins of the concept of experiential learning and teaching, which was to form the basis of the work in Lithuania, can be traced to the work of John Dewey in the middle of this century, and later to the student centred philosophy of Carl Rogers. More specifically, the founder is usually thought of as being David Kolb, who in 1974 produced his 'cycle of learning' which subsequently has been adapted and developed. One development is that of Burnard (1986), who produced 'a means of demonstrating how practical experience can be used as the basis for planning theoretical "blocks of study"' and followed a five stage format which appeared to us, the tutors, suitable for the proposed in-service course in Lithuania.

What is common to the work of Kolb and those who followed is the belief that human beings have the capacity to learn from experience, that experience is a never ending event in our lives and that as a learning species our continued development as a society and as individuals depends upon adapting 'not only in the reactive sense .... but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping' (Kolb 1984). Eric and Carol Hall (1988) decided that 'the process of developing awareness and changing habits is central to the activities that come under the general heading of experiential learning.'

Certainly the Hall approach appeared very suitable for the Lithuania project, where the participating managers already would have had experience of both the Soviet centralised model as well as the freer, rapidly changing and less certain model evident since independence. If this existing base of experience could be coupled with new inputs from the tutors, concerned with new ideas and theories of educational management, and the two married during stages two and three of the Burnard model then a rich and valuable combination of stages four and five could result. Relevant action plans could be put into practice during our absence which would provide a valuable experience resource for future visits. This would, as Kolb envisaged, see experiential learning as 'the process that links education, work and personal development' (Weil and McGill 1989).

A problem we anticipated was how productive a 'new' approach could be with a group of educators that, as far as we knew, had experienced very formal techniques of management and in-service training for many years and who were products of the previously noted problematic conditions identified by Vooglaid and Marja. While according to Kulich (1983) the concept of self-development through adult education has had deep roots in Eastern Europe, inclusive of Lithuania, there are dangers in assuming that continuous self development programmes, as part of adult education, contain the same concepts and ideology in countries newly independent from the Soviet empire as are to be found in the democratic countries of Western Europe. Despite 'some theoreticians ... believing that the ultimate aim of adult education is to enable all adults to become self motivated and self learners ...' in the Soviet empire adult education had to play a subservient role to 'the prevailing social system and into the planned economy, as well as being subject to Communist Party and state control' (Kulich 1983). The precepts of

experiential learning did not appear to fit this model but did offer the opportunity to empower the participants in:

> reflection on prior experience in relation to new ideas and information, an active consideration of the implications of research in the context of a real life situation and the assimilation and application of intellectual understandings to actual problems.
>
> (Weil and McGill 1989)

Course evaluations.

The evaluation of the course occurred in four ways. These methods were: group questionnaires, individual reports presented by participants, school visits to observe the participants at work and finally individual and small group feedback on set problems. The three major constraints upon the tutors in carrying out evaluation were those of distance, time and language.

Distance was an obvious constraint when the tutors were based in the United Kingdom and the course participants were spread throughout Lithuanian educational institutions. Any evaluation had to be completed in Lithuania. Postal surveys were discounted because of costs and practical difficulties.

The constraints of time posed a serious problem in Lithuania. The teaching programme, on each of the teaching visits, ended at 4pm on the final day. As many participants lived in the outlying areas of the country, (with private transport beyond their financial reach and public transport inconvenient), any information gathering and evaluation had to take place immediately after lunch on the final day. This only allowed some form of mass generation of information. To have attempted to use the questionnaires before this final day would have reduced the impact of final sessions of action planning and presenting of ideas.

A major difficulty in planning to evaluate was language. This manifested itself in a number of ways. The teaching programme and evaluation of it were conducted mainly through interpreters. The interpreters, themselves, were very busy, often frequently teaching at night because of interpreting during the day. Consequently they had little time to translate questionnaires or to interpret evaluation interviews. Throughout the teaching programmes there were occasions when a word or phrase used by a tutor had to be explained and discussed at great length. This suggested that evaluation through interpreters would be problematic, and was of concern when writing evaluation questions. For this reason many of the questionnaire items used the tick box type of information generator. This also allowed us to avoid a large amount of translation once the questionnaires had been completed. Both time and language constraints reduced the opportunity and potential effectiveness of using individual interview techniques other than with the few who could communicate in English. The language constraint was a further hindrance for at least one participant who was Russian by birth, spoke no English and spoke Lithuanian as a second language.

Evaluation results.

The results gathered through the evaluation process indicated that experiential learning and teaching strategies are a major asset when attempting to overcome the inertia of thought that Kuolys (*op cit*) noted.

With regard to experiential teaching and learning strategies 68% of the participants indicated that they had very little knowledge of such techniques before the programme. A further 14% indicated that they had no knowledge at all of experiential teaching and learning. Yet of these

participants 61% had felt confident enough to use experiential teaching methods as part of the staff development and training sessions which they conducted for colleagues as a result of experiencing the programme.

Our teaching methods were examined by the use of open questions. The methods worked well and generated a large positive response in favour of those activities that usually are identified as being common in experiential programmes (see Table I). These methods included group work, self awareness exercises, exploring experience, self evaluation and education games. Nearly half the group specifically mentioned the group/team work exercises. Some responses identified particular strategies, examples being SWOT and PEST analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats for SWOT and Political, Environmental, Social, Technological for PEST). Many participants identified these techniques in the later questionnaires as ones they had used successfully in their subsequent work.

No methods were generally disliked or felt not to work. Most respondents made a nil response to this question, only four identified methods they did not appreciate. The first was the more traditional formal lecturing which occupied a very small part of the programme. The second included some elements of individual work which may indicate the need for a strong supportive environment identified by Boud *et al* (1993) when promoting experiential techniques.

TABLE I: EVALUATION OF METHODS.

Name two methods which you found *most* successful	
group work	37
self-evaluation and self-awareness exercises	15
activities and games	11
communication activities	6
'testing'	6
exploration of own experience	6
SWOT and PEST analyses	3
planning	3
Name two methods which you found *least* successful	
some formal lecturing	4
individual work	4

A key element when promoting an experiential based programme is recognition, by the tutors, of the value of participants' prior experiences and the emphasis of links to participants' practice. Some questions investigated this. The results (Table II) indicate that the programme achieved a major impact in terms of drawing on experience and future intentions. Likewise the confidence to attempt to use the introduced theories and principles was very high, most participants replied.

The three areas presented in Table III identified the understanding of, confidence in using and ability to use experiential learning and teaching methods. There were no wholly negative responses. At least 60% felt that change had been effected to some extent in each of the three categories. But this was an area where only a small number felt that great change had been effected. Designing the programme to include the tenets of experiential learning/teaching had achieved a notable impact but not as great as the tutors had hoped in breaching the "system that taught them not to think" (Zygas 1991).

TABLE II: PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS.

Did the programme encourage you to:	To great extent	To some extent	Very little	Not at all
a. relate theories and principles to your own past experience;	71%	25%	4%	0%
b. relate theories and principles to your future plan and intentions;	64%	36%	0%	0%
c. learn from/understand better your previous experience as a manager;	54%	46%	0%	0%
Did the programme increase your confidence in using any of the theories and principles that were introduced?	54%	42%	4%	0%

TABLE III: EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING TECHNIQUES.

Did the programme increase your:	To great extent	To some extent	Very little	Not at all
a. understanding of experiential t/l techniques;	21	72	7	0
b. confidence in using experiential t/l techniques;	11	72	11	0
c. ability to use experiential t/l techniques?	29	64	7	0

TABLE IV: EVALUATION OF UNDERSTANDING.

Please indicate how your understanding of the following issues has been increased as a result of the programme	To great extent	To some extent	Very little	Not at all
The purpose and value of teams	75	19	6	0
School evaluation	64	27	3	6
Supporting teams	63	30	7	0
The nature of leadership	62	32	6	0
The school mission	59	31	3	7
School development plans	58	37	2	3
School effectiveness	54	41	5	0
Staff development	53	31	7	9
Running meetings	42	47	11	0
Communication skills	42	48	7	3
Appraisal	42	49	9	0
The role of the School Director	41	37	19	3
School management	40	46	14	0
Curriculum planning	36	52	12	0

Table IV identifies the key themes that were used during the two year programme. For all of these themes we used different techniques and methods within a broadly experiential approach so that links between past, current and future practice could be investigated and stressed. All the participants were asked to rate how their level of understanding had been affected. The participants clearly identify an increased understanding in all areas. The final column indicates no increased understanding. Only six of the fourteen categories had such a response and the

highest of these concerned staff development where 9% felt there was no change at all. The greatest impact has taken place in those areas that concern personal knowledge and development as opposed to institutional development. Thus three of the four highest rated areas concern the personal areas of knowledge and performance, whilst curriculum planning and development, which might have been expected to be a priority for increased understanding, was the topic in which least increased level of understanding was evident. The results in Table IV also indicate participants' key areas of interest: the purpose and value of teams, supporting teams and the nature of leadership were three key areas of concern and three of the four areas where a high percentage of participants indicated a greatly increased understanding.

With a programme such as this it is necessary to identify, where possible, the function of the experience as an agent for change. The participants were asked how their level of understanding had increased, or not, in relation to their professional role and effectiveness. 54% and 61% respectively stated that their understanding had been greatly increased in relation to understanding the nature of the job of the school manager and how they could be more effective in this role. When asked how their understanding of their own effectiveness had changed 22% answered 'to a great extent' and 78% answered 'to some extent'. It would have been beneficial to have been able to explore this issue concerning effectiveness, or otherwise, of the person as an individual as opposed to their effectiveness as a manager, in order to attempt to identify the reasons for different responses, e.g., high levels of confidence already in existence or a lack of confidence in the ability to effect change caused by factors outside their control.

Some participants requested follow-up meetings during two subsequent visits to Lithuania by the programme tutors. Their actions in their work had changed. They did work differently. They attempted a high degree of innovation and achieved results. Some reported that their expectations of a greater level of impact on themselves rather than on their colleagues or the whole school. They all had a proactive attitude towards effecting change within their organisations. One area of achievement was the formation of support groups which were largely absent when the programme was initiated. Mutual support was a theme which was stressed throughout the teaching visits. Most participants had stayed in contact with other group members for both personal and professional reasons. Only one participant expected no further contact with other members of the group once the programme had finished. Three School Directors in the town of Panevezys had established a Directors group. One author visited Panevezys and met with this group. In a short time it had achieved a clear identity and included the majority of school directors within the city.

Reflections on the evaluations.

Apathy and passivity were mentioned frequently by Lithuanians as typical of their contemporary collective behaviour. Lithuanian colleagues and course members informally talked passionately and movingly about the Soviet period and the patterns of thinking, communicating and acting which came to pervade that era. In private conversation, when discussing relationships within school (teacher/teacher, teacher child) and between school members and the wider community (teacher/parent, for example) education professionals most strongly emphasised the nature of communication in the Soviet period. This was characterised by command-style, top-down modes of communication which were intended to lead to a high degree of conformity and convergence which in turn encouraged and supported the inertia noted above. In general, it can be said that bottom-up communication was covert (through exceptional, privileged channels) or, if public, predominantly rhetorical and hollow statements of conformity and loyalty in which people said what was expected, frequently through formal expressions and pronouncements. Such a culture, established in Soviet-dominated bureaucracies, worked to discourage communication which was likely to be genuinely interactive, authentically penetrating, revealing or open. This is akin to the behaviour described by Milosz (1981) as 'Ketman', concealment of sincere belief in order to survive, the use of an

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accepted style, terminology and ritual in communication. A consequence of this was that it contributed to low levels of spontaneity, creativity, critical debate and discourse within the education system and inside educational institutions.

It is important to recognise the influence which these patterns of restricted and inauthentic communication continue to exert in schools. Even during the Soviet period, Lithuanians frequently claim, people in schools recognised dishonesty, lacked trust and confidence in individuals and institutions. This was a climate in which all parties - for different reasons - had expectations of restricted communication, as a consequence schools appear to have been seen, generally, to be impoverished environments; all parties with a stake in schools - parents, pupils, teachers - had restricted expectations in terms of learning, range of study, the behaviour and development of children. It is notable that, in the conversations upon which these observations are based, individuals frequently present themselves as victims, and so reveal the characteristics of passivity and apathy which they themselves suggest are typical of people who have lived long in a totalitarian state, and which are widely referred to in discussions about the development of education in Lithuania.

Some behaviours which were evident in the in-service sessions can be traced to the preceding period. Participants frequently expressed themselves formally during training sessions; expression was guarded, otiose and abstract; critical expression was rare and weak; personal declarations were infrequent; people commonly asserted that their (collective) communication skills were poor. Communication of the style described can be conceptualised as staying in the 'safe zone' of communication and avoiding areas which would be personally revealing, or might lead directly to controversy or challenge to the status quo. There is a need, therefore, noted above, to rehearse, demonstrate and publicise new communication techniques. Experiential learning methods were used to exemplify, promote and support more spontaneous and open communication. Encouragingly, all participants strongly endorsed the view that, for them, the programme was more enjoyable, more interesting, more involving, more practical, more relevant and of more long term practical benefit than anything they had experienced previously.

The impact appears to have been greatest on the participants as individuals rather than their organisations. If one refers to the 'experiential villages' of Weil and McGill (1989), despite the interrelated nature of the four villages, the indications are that the village of personal development, for key staff, must be given a higher priority than the village favouring organisational and social change. Early indications suggest that as a result of this programme personal learning and change are in advance of the impact on colleagues and organisation. Long term evaluation is required to assess whether the participants of this programme will become a major force for change, as intended by the Ministry for Education and Culture.

In general a shift from static to dynamic education practices and relationships is taking place in Lithuania. In this transitional period there appears to be tentativeness and uncertainty about using and developing 'new' modes and practices of communication in professional arenas. This is compounded by the fact that the education bureaucracy remains characterised by the persistence of inhibiting low-level controls associated with the continued use of crude and inflexible measures of performance. Models of new practice are not well developed, and where they exist they are inadequately publicised and celebrated. Vooglaid and Märja (*op cit*) have identified six problematic aspects of this protracted transition; for individual managers the challenge is to develop, authentically, their own authority. An experiential learning environment enables most of the six problems to be addressed and encourages managers to explore, collaboratively, their performance of their role, combining an intelligible introduction to management with potential for immediacy of application.

The results so far indicate that the decision to embark on a broad experiential programme on both a macro and micro scale has born fruit. We would agree with Candy (1981) that there is a level of futility in searching for one right method of teaching whether it be experiential or

otherwise. Cross (1976) stated that for the (mythical?) average student the style of teaching appears to make little difference. In Lithuania this was not so. The country and its people have emerged abruptly from a period of political and social suppression and been accelerated into modernity, even postmodernity, bringing about a break-up of the established order and distinctive changes in the conditions of knowledge. Edwards (1994) has linked the rise of experiential learning in the west with the fragmentation associated with post-modernism and the hegemony of the middle class; he has characterised experiential learning as an aid to 'operating effectively within the confusion' (Edwards 1994). Lithuanian confusion is of a different character, as previous sections described. Within this the managers wished to work collaboratively and with mutual support to establish and promote democratic and democratising social institutions; one strong theme of the courses was social learning. The decision to employ an experiential approach that was andragogical and humanistic in its underlying beliefs proved to be challenging, liberating and of great benefit to the participants and tutors alike. One participant, in conversation with the Director of the In-service Teachers Centre in Vilnius said: 'I feel like an orange that has been squeezed and that there is a lot of juice, all of which is useful.'

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